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PICKINGS

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Ask other players to write to us!

ISSUED FOR BANJO, MANDOLIN AND GUITAR ENTHUSIASTS

No. 24. FEBRUARY, MARCH. 1938.

RULES ARE MADE FOR STUDENTS.

By EMILE GRIMSHAW.

A music student who has evidently acquired the excellent habit of thinking for himself, wrote to me quite recently in order to point out that he was frequently puzzled by the apparent inconsistencies between the laws of the text-book and the actual productions of the finished artist.

All young students of harmony and composition must be taught rules—what is correct and what is considered to be incorrect. They all make a start in the same way. Not only musicians, but painters, sculptors, authors, and others must all follow the same hard and fast rules during their early studies.

There is, however, such a thing as individuality. We are all different in some way or another, and there is often a tendency to step out of the narrow groove and develop along different lines. The success of an artist depends upon the manner in which, through the medium of his work, he stands out apart from his contemporaries.

The author of a book entitled " Harmonisation of Melodies " included in the work the following very true and admirable statement:

" The rules given and followed in harmonising these melodies, beyond being given as useful at this stage, are in no sense to be regarded as general rules in harmonisation, for, indeed, later on they must be frequently disregarded."

If half a dozen arrangers were given a melody to harmonise, it is not at all likely that even two would do it in the same way, and the greater their knowledge and experience the more would they all be likely to differ.

On the other hand we know there are many who prefer to keep to the simple rules and harmonies and reproduce what has already been presented dozens of times before. These writers lack individuality. It is easier to imitate than to originate. The world is full

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of imitators: composers who imitate another composer's tunes; players who copy a better known artist's style; comedians who steal another performer's patter, and dance bands that copy and imitate the methods of other star combinations.

The only time when it should really be necessary to imitate is in one's text-book days, and a welcome usually awaits the person who makes use of initiative and has sufficient confidence in himself to present something in a different way.

* * *

TREMOLO SUGGESTIONS.

A small, pliable plectrum with a smooth bevelled playing edge will give the best results.

Cultivate a free wrist and move the elbow joint as little as possible.

Skim the surface of the strings with the least possible portion of the plectrum's tip and a smooth tone will result. To prevent the plectrum sinking too far between the strings, rest the curved little finger of the right hand on the sound-board very lightly and move the finger with the remainder of the hand.

The plectrum should be held loosely so that there is plenty of " give." A firmly held plectrum not only produces a harsh or disagreeable tone, it also greatly restricts the freedom and flexibility of the stroke.

There should be no conscious measurement or counting of the strokes in the tremolo which will vary in accordance with the natural flexibility of the player's wrist and the style of music that is played.

A good tremolo is dependent on smoothness rather than rapidity. If the strokes are too rapid the string has scarcely time to vibrate before it is stopped and re-started by the next stroke.

When pairs of strings are tremoloed as on a mandolin, the player should be careful to vibrate both strings continuously.

When tremoloing a single string the plectrum should not be allowed to pass any further on either side of the string than is necessary.

The one purpose of the tremolo is to sustain sound. Listen to the long bowed note of a violin. That smooth effect cannot possibly be equalled by the use of a plectrum, but it is something to imitate and approach as nearly as is possible.

ANOTHER WINNER.

In the last issue of " Pickings " it was suggested that the greatest fretted instrument achievement of 1937 was the publication of " Show Boat " for the Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar. Many musical shows contain only one or two outstanding tunes; " Show Boat " has many, and although strictly copyright and subject to heavy royalties, all these are included in the Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar arrangement. Many of the thousands of players who enthuse about this number may have thought that it would be impossible to arrange and issue another piece that would be equally good and successful. We have carefully examined dozens of world-famous show numbers and song successes in the hope of finding something that would appeal strongly to our players, while at the same time be suitable for rendition on the Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar. So far we have found three which we intend to arrange and issue in co-operation with the copyright owners. All have stood the severe test of time and in consequence will probably remain as popular in the years to come as they are to-day and were in the days when they were first played and heard. The first of these arrangements is a medley of six waltzes—each tune is by a different composer and has never before been published for a fretted instrument. The fact that the popularity of these tunes continues year after year accounts for the title of the selection, which is " Everlasting Waltz." Turn to the back page of this issue of " Pickings " where you will find further particulars; then include the number in your repertoire as a Banjo, Mandolin or Guitar solo or as a special item for any combination of players in a B. M. and G. Band.

* * *

DEATH OF MRS. MERTON

of Glasgow.

We regret to hear, just before going to press, that Mrs. Merton died on Jan. 7th after an illness of only four days.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Merton must be well known by name to thousands of fretted-instrument players in this country. They have taught the banjo, mandolin and guitar for many years in Glasgow and have appeared together with great success as instrumental duettists at local concerts promoted by themselves and others.

In addition to being a clever executant and teacher, Mrs. Merton was tremendously enthusiastic in every branch of her profession.

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JOTTINGS.

Competitions for banjo, mandolin and guitar promoted by the organisers of the Leigh-on-Sea Musical Festival will be held at Leigh-on-Sea on Saturday, March 5th.

* * *

Mr. A. D. Cammeyer, the eminent zither-banjoist and composer, has recently retired from business and professional activities. Cammeyer's name will be remembered so long as there are banjoists who can appreciate good music. We ask them to join us in wishing him many happy years ahead.

* * *

In the previous issue of " Pickings " we made a mistake in advertising a book of 132 pages containing 200 guitar solos as being for the plectrum style of playing. All the solos in this book are arranged for the finger style. The price is 5/- and no guitarist will ever obtain a bigger bargain.

* * *

The Croydon B. M. & G. Club's Sixth Annual Concert will be held at the Large Public Hall, George Street, Croydon, on Wednesday, March 9th next, at 7.45 p.m. In addition to the Croydon B. M. & G. Band and the Banjo Quintet, the following artists will appear: Mario de Pietro, Leonard Henry, Jack Upson, pianist and entertainer, Charles True, baritone, and Horace Dover, banjoist.

* * *

The Willesden Mandolin and Guitar Club under the direction of Mr. Mancini is making fine progress. More mandolinists are required, and players who would like to join this club are requested to apply to the Secretary at 71, Townsend Lane, Kingsbury, N.W.9.

* * *

A club for guitarists which will include two expert mandolinists is being formed in Glasgow. Mr. Frank Ray, the well-known teacher of fretted instruments, has been appointed President, and local players who would like to become members are invited to attend at Room 5, Glasgow School of Motoring, 3, Elmbank Crescent at 8.30 p.m. any Friday evening.

* * *

Mr. G. A. Keeler has been appointed Chairman of the British Federation of Banjoists, Mandolinists and Guitarists (Southern Section). Mr. E. J. Bangs has unfortunately been compelled to resign his Secretaryship owing to pressure of business engagements. The new Secretary is Mr. Leslie Marsh of 72, The Crescent, Tottenham, N.17, and the Assistant Secretary and Treasurer is Miss Florence Leathwick.

* * *

Mr. Sigvard Akerman, the composer of the new plectrum-guitar solo "Swinging Strings," advertised elsewhere in this issue of " Pickings," has a big reputation as a guitarist in his own country, Sweden. In addition to playing in a well-known dance orchestra, he broadcasts frequently, has an extensive teaching connection and has written and published a large and complete book of instruction for the plectrum-guitar in the Swedish language. Every keen plectrum-guitarist should include " Swinging Strings " in his repertoire. The solo is issued with a very interesting 2nd guitar accompaniment.

* * *

QUERIES.

J. A.—All chords on the finger-played guitar should be produced arpeggio or in spread-out style. *All* the required right-hand fingers should rest on the strings before the latter are vibrated. The thumb should be extended; the fingers should move towards the palm of the hand and the highest sounding note should be accented.

R. M.—A book of popular old-time songs with banjo accompaniments that we highly recommend is 29 College Songs arranged by Sykes. Included are " Tavern in the Town " "My Bonnie," "Kingdom Coming," "Camptown Races," " Little Brown Jug," and other community favourites in the simple keys of C and G. All the words are included and in addition all the songs have the ukulele symbols. The price is 2/- –post free if cash is sent with order.

A. P.—The capodastro is a small attachment that can be clamped on the fingerboard of a fretted instrument for the purpose of altering the pitch of the strings and changing the key. For example, assuming that a player knows a few accompanying chords in the key of D, he can, by fixing a capodastro behind the first fret of a guitar, finger the chords in the same way but they will sound in the key of E flat. By fitting the attachment behind the second fret the same fingered chords will be in the key of E, and so on.

K. W. is trying all he can to learn harmony from standard text-books and apply his knowledge to his own instrument which is the guitar. " Why," he asks, " do many modern composers for the plectrum-guitar break most of the rules by writing in consecutive fourths and fifths; using an odd number of

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bars in a movement and introducing weird chords that I cannot trace in the books I have studied?"

Some of these solos when well played sound really effective, but they are not for beginners; and the listener must realise that they represent an ultra modern style of composition. It is to be hoped that our modern guitar composers fully and clearly understand what it is they mean to express. The Old Masters would probably call them the Young Messrs.

H. M.—" Lancashire Clogs " was composed as a banjo solo in the year 1911. In the same year Messrs. Hawkes & Son published it as a piano solo and also issued it for full orchestra, military band and brass band. " Lancashire Clogs " was featured in Charlie Chaplin's film " The Circus " and has recently been used in three different issues of the Pathe Gazette.

A. McD. writes to say that he plays every one of our guitar solos, his special favourites being " Rachmaninoff's ' Prelude ' " " Deep Harmony " and the recently issued " Bach's Gavotte."

Congratulations to A. McD. on his keen guitar interest and good taste. It is a fine achievement to be able to play so many good solos—from Rachmaninoff to Bach and, shall we say, Back to Rachmaninoff.

* * *

WHAT OTHERS SAY.

Mr. V. J. Smith of Romford writes: The Revelation G5 Guitar is everything you claim it to be. The tone is clear and powerful and the volume is the biggest any of my pals have heard. The G5 Revelation is certainly the world's best.

Mr. W. Adams of Whitecroft writes: I have tried other makes of strings on my " Revelation " guitar, but they do not ring out like the " Silvatone."

Mr. Ernest G. Moulton of Derby Line, U.S.A., writes: Your " Rubygut " strings for banjo are the best I have ever used. Please send me another dollar's worth.

* * *

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'CELLO MODEL GUITAR, f sound holes, fingerboard and body lined white, in case	3	10	0
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HARTFORD DE LUXE 12 gn. GUITAR, discontinued model, in case	5	10	0
HARTFORD GUITAR, late model, in case	6	0	0
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GIBSON L.4 GUITAR, cost £29/0/0, in case	11	11	0
E.G. "REVELATION" GUITAR, 16 gn. model, with case	9	9	0
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PANORMO, LACOTE and PRATTEN finger style Guitars ... each	8	8	0
SCARTH GUITAR, neck and body lined ivorine, single machines, finger plate, excellent condition	6	6	0

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BARNES & MULLINS BANJO, in case, cost 12 gns.	4	10	0
CLIFFORD ESSEX "REGAL" 4-string plectrum banjo, complete with case	9	9	0
GREENOPP TENOR-BANJO, and case	3	3	0
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Printed by Printonia, Ltd., 26, Station Road, South Norwood, S.E.25, and Published by Emile Grimshaw & Son, 54-55 Piccadilly, London, W.1.